

In addition, Easley has launched economic development-themed high schools. With help from the N.C. New Schools Project, each school is designed around an academic theme that focuses on emerging industries such as health care, biotech, information technology and international commerce. These schools enroll up to 400 students, allowing teachers and students to be more motivated to learn and stay in school.

The themed-focus enables students to make the connection between their courses and the field in which they expect to earn a living. There are 25 of these schools across the state with plans to open 10 more in the 2007 school year to focus on science, technology, engineering and math. The initiatives are also supported by grants from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Southern Growth Policies Board is a public policy think tank based in Research Triangle Park. Formed by the region's governors in 1971, Southern Growth Policies Board develops and advances visionary economic development policies by providing a forum for collaboration among a diverse cross-section of the region's governors, legislators, business and academic leaders and the economic and community development sectors. Southern Growth provides its members, and the region, with authoritative research, discussion forums and pilot projects in the areas of technology and innovation, globalization, workforce development, community development, civic engagement and leadership. To learn more about Southern Growth Policies Board, visit www.southern.org.

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